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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 158th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 27 September 1994, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Miss MASON

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4)

Honduras

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mrs. Mejia, Mrs. Quiroz Cordero, Mrs. Valladares Lanza, Mrs. de Pouck and Mrs. Carías Zapata (Honduras) took seats at the Committee table.

2. The CHAIRPERSON welcomed the delegation of Honduras and invited it to introduce the Honduran report (CRC/C/3/Add.17).

3. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras) said that Honduras had been one of the first 20 States to sign the Convention. Awareness of the provisions of the Convention among the Honduran people and officials nevertheless remained limited, largely through lack of information about the instrument rather than through apathy or lack of interest in helping children. International instruments ratified by Honduras became part of domestic legislation.

4. The innovative contents of the Convention had an important role to play in developing and improving the actual situation of children in Honduras. A National Plan of Action emerging from the Eleventh Meeting of Heads of Central American States was currently being implemented, notably through the new Minors Code and the proposed office of municipal commissioner for children's rights.

5. The initial report of Honduras (CRC/C/3/Add.17) had been prepared in 1993, on the basis of national legislation, by government officials who had not taken into account the broader social situation and the economic context in which Honduran children lived. Subsequently, following receipt of the list of issues which the Committee wished to take up in connection with the consideration of the initial report of Honduras, the National Social Welfare Board had convened a broader meeting of governmental, institutional and non-governmental bodies to prepare responses to the various issues and to supplement the initial report.

6. It should be noted in that context that: participating NGOs had reserved the right to provide additional information and had requested the inclusion of a special section on moves towards increased implementation of the Convention; given the short period of time available to prepare the responses, mention had not been made of all relevant programmes currently in existence; the programmes mentioned had not originally been designed specifically to ensure implementation of the Convention but rather to improve the situation of children generally; improved coordination between NGOs and governmental bodies was currently under way in order to ensure greater programme effectiveness and impact; various governmental bodies were in the process of reviewing their working methods and the thrust of the assistance they provided for children; the drafting committee, having prepared the responses to the list of issues, had suggested that the National Commission on the Rights of the Child should be reactivated, with broad powers to improve planning and follow-up to the

various programmes; and lastly, the Government had made clear its political will to ensure implementation of the Convention and to support all programmes and projects to improve children's well-being.

7. One of the first acts of the current Government had been to examine, with UNICEF support, the possible reorientation of social policy on children and to consider the viability of establishing a ministry of the family or some other body to coordinate State policy on social matters concerning children and the family. The joint preparation of the responses had provided an opportunity for governmental and non-governmental bodies to get to know one another better and consider new forms of cooperation.

8. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the Honduran delegation for its written response to the list of issues, which unfortunately had not been received in time to be made available in the various languages. She invited the delegation to provide a summary of those responses in the order outlined in the list of issues raised by the Committee, the first part of which read:

"General measures of implementation

(arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6, of the Convention)

1. Please provide more details about the process of preparing the report, in particular with regard to popular participation and the involvement of non-governmental organizations.

2. To what extent have school curricula been adjusted to make room for education about the Convention?

3. Are there training programmes for social workers, teachers, health personnel, lawyers, the police and others who work with children about the principles and norms of the Convention?

4. Please describe the national institutions created since the submission of the report to promote the rights of the child and monitor implementation.

5. What is the status of the Convention in relation to national law? Can the provisions of the Convention be invoked in court?

6. What plans are there for the adoption of the new Minors Code? What other legal changes have been adopted as a consequence of the ratification of the Convention?

7. What plans exist to implement the provisions of the Convention at the national and local level? Please describe steps taken to implement article 4 in regard to the allocation 'to the maximum extent of (...) available resources for the rights of the child'.

8. Please indicate what proportion of the national budget is allocated to social priorities for children in official budgets, both central and local.

9. To what extent is international cooperation designed to enhance the implementation of the Convention? What share of international assistance is devoted to programmes which benefit children?

10. Have the programme of the Social Investment Fund and other initiatives for 'social compensation' been evaluated? What are their impact in relation to disadvantaged children?"

9. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras), responding to the first question and recalling her earlier comments concerning the preparation of the initial report and subsequent broadening of consultation in preparing the responses to the list of issues, said that as the initial report had placed emphasis on relevant national legislation rather than on the social and economic context, non-governmental organizations had prepared an alternative report which focused on both the legal and social situation of children. The NGOs had not been able to participate actively in preparing the report but had subsequently been requested informally to take part in a "second reading" of the report.

10. On question 2, she observed that the school curriculum, from pre-school to secondary level, included activities promoting the all-round development of children and the exercise of their rights. It included such subjects as: the child and the family; children and their duties and rights in the community; children and their physical context. At the primary level, human rights were included under subjects taught relating to the community and its development and through projects involving active pupil participation and the preparation of a manual providing guidelines for the personal safety of children. At the secondary level, civics lessons covered violence against children, sexual abuse, and the right of children to enjoy an adequate standard of living. Honduras was participating in a study, in cooperation with the University of Peace in Costa Rica, to promote human rights within the educational system. Lastly, the National Commission for the Defence of Human Rights (CONAPRODEH) had recently signed an agreement with the Ministry of Education to include human rights in the school curriculum.

11. Replying to question 3, she said there was little systematic training relating to the Convention in Honduras, but joint efforts had been made in that direction by a number of private institutions on the basis of a wide-ranging education project. The Centre for Research and Promotion of Human Rights (CIPRODEH), a non-governmental organization, gave sporadic training relating to the Convention to members of the police and armed forces, as well as magistrates, university staff, and women's and workers' groups. The National Social Welfare Board also occasionally gave talks to technical and other personnel associated with it. In cooperation with UNICEF and the University of Honduras, it had launched a programme to train street educators; 100 such educators had been trained in 1991, and a "university diploma for street educators" had been introduced in 1993 and was expected to be awarded to the first graduates in April 1994. The Ministry of Education was planning training activities for the period 1994-1998 which would include information on the principles and norms of the Convention. The Ministry of Public Health was also envisaging activities designed to reach vulnerable groups in the metropolitan region in order to promote the implementation of the Convention. Lastly, the Inter-American Children's Institute had sponsored training programmes on adoption, prevention of drug addiction, etc.

12. In connection with question 4, she observed that while no specific national institution had yet been created, efforts were being made within existing institutions to ensure implementation of the Convention. They included the creation of the National Coordinating Commission for the Rights of the Child, decreed in September 1993; the creation of CONAPRODEH in October 1992; the creation by the National Congress of special commissions for the family and children in February 1994, and of a special office of procurator for matters relating to children in July 1994; and a network of "commissioners for children's rights" at the municipal level. The National Social Welfare Board included a division dealing with minors established in 1992; the "amigo" programme set up in April 1994 to focus attention on street children; a scholarship programme for street children; a supplementary food programme for mothers and children; the street educator programme already mentioned; the strengthening and re-orientation of a programme to assist child pedlars in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula; the signing of a letter of intent with private development organizations to promote implementation of the Convention; a "school for parents" system to encourage parent involvement; and an agreement with the Inter-American Children's Institute in November 1992 to provide specialized information on the child and the family. The Ministry of Education, in conjunction with UNICEF, had launched the "active and participatory school" programme, and had signed an agreement with ethnic groups to establish a bilingual and intercultural education programme for schools in areas inhabited by ethnic groups.

13. Turning to question 5, she repeated that the Convention, like other international conventions ratified by Honduras, automatically formed part of domestic law, which principle had been confirmed by the Supreme Court of Justice. It had further been confirmed that, in the event of conflict between an international instrument and a domestic law, the former would prevail.

14. In reply to question 6, she said that the Minors Code was in its final stages of preparation prior to submission to Congress, where it was expected to be considered in October 1994. Legislative changes pursuant to the new Code included provisions concerning the minimum age (16 years) for employment; the minimum age at which an individual was considered to be criminally liable; provisions concerning maltreatment and corruption of children; pre-military education and military service; and adoption. Areas where reform was envisaged under the Minors Code included unhealthy or dangerous work, penalties in certain circumstances relating to abortion or the death of a newborn child, failure to provide assistance within the family; the administration of property owned by minors, and the allocation of land to both men and women including minors.

15. Mrs. QUIROZ CORDERO, also replying to question 6, said that, as presently formulated, the Minors (jurisdiction) Act was not in accord with national realities. A thorough analysis was currently under way of the draft Minors Code. In her view, that Code, the purpose of which was to provide greater protection for minors under the law, would resolve many of the problems currently faced by Honduran judges in the prosecution of minors at the national level, and establish the rights of minors in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as adequate procedures for the protection of children and the treatment of juvenile offenders.

16. In Honduras, there was much interest in the reform not only of the Minors Code, but of other legal instruments. Commissions had been established by the National Congress to bring the Family Code, the Criminal Code and the Labour Code into line with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In her view, all such reforms would improve the administration of justice for minors in Honduras. As of 1995, when those reforms would become law, Honduran magistrates would have new legal codes upon which to base their decisions.

17. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras), moving on to question 7, said that the ratification by Honduras of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had set in motion efforts, at the national and local levels, to organize resources and programmes in support of the rights of children. A National Children's Association had been established to implement the provisions of the Convention. Its constituent agreement had been signed by 92 per cent of Honduran mayors, who were currently receiving training in the area of children's rights. Each municipality was also appointing private individuals who were respected members of the community as "commissioners for children's rights". Those "commissioners" would undertake to familiarize themselves with the terms of the Convention and with the rights of children in general, and would be responsible, at the local level, for seeing that such problems were adequately addressed. Furthermore, the National Social Welfare Board was committed to the challenge of converting itself into an institution designed primarily to serve children and the family. That initiative enjoyed the support of the national Government, and of the Inter-American Development Bank and the Inter-American Children's Institute. On approval by the National Congress, it would become effective in 1995.

18. Proceeding to question 8, she said that it was difficult to establish the position of the budget that was available for the social needs of children: firstly, the budgets of administrative and operational programmes overlapped, and secondly, no reliable records existed. Certain statistical data suggested, however, that 13 per cent of the budget had been allocated for the care of children in 1994, or a total of $119 million. Although that figure could not be broken down, it encompassed local, national and regional programmes. The Honduran Social Investment Fund, which had managed over $90 million in its first three years of operation, spent approximately 85 per cent of its social investment budget on the development of infrastructure in such areas as health and education. Educational infrastructure included pre-schools, kindergartens, and primary and secondary schools.

19. In reply to question 9, she said that the international community had grown more and more willing to support the efforts of countries to implement the provisions of the Convention. An estimated 9 per cent of international assistance received by Honduras was devoted to programmes for children, or approximately $16 million. It was important to remember that while some programmes were designed to provide direct assistance to the child, programmes designed to help the mother also indirectly assisted children. At the 17th Pan-American Child Congress organized by the Inter-American Children's Institute in San José, some of the topics addressed had been the situation and status of children, the welfare of children, and the cultural identity of children. A workshop on disabled children had also been held.

20. On question 10, she said that the programmes of the Social Investment Fund and other social compensation initiatives had been evaluated for their impact on disadvantaged children. The Fund, concentrating a percentage of its resources on children who for various reasons were at risk, invested in more than 3,000 education programmes, mostly at the pre-school level, and 803 projects relating to clean water, electricity and sanitation. Its nutrition programmes, numbering 88, included businesses owned by mothers, mini-farms and mini-market gardens. More than 40 projects were under way for the benefit of street children. The Fund's programmes covered such areas as the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of schools, child-care centres, kindergartens, baby-feeding centres, recreation areas and sanitation services. Furthermore, pre-school programmes provided nutrition for children up to the age of six and primary school programmes served breakfast to children who attended school regularly; the food-stamp programme for female heads of households and the mother-and-child food-stamp programme had been shown to improve health and education development indicators. In general, strategies for improving the health of the poor had proven effective.

21. The CHAIRPERSON invited members to put questions to the Honduran delegation.

22. Mr. KOLOSOV inquired whether Honduras would be essentially the same if the Convention did not exist or if Honduras had not ratified it. Did the Convention genuinely help children in Honduras? It would be useful if an example could be provided of an instance in which the Convention had been invoked in a court of law in defence of any right of a child. And how did those educators who disseminated information about the Convention, in particular, and the rights of children in general, acquire their knowledge of that subject?

23. Mr. HAMMARBERG said that his questions involved the economic situation in Honduras, where two in three children suffered from extreme poverty. Firstly, it would be useful to know the status of Honduran negotiations on relief of its foreign debt. Had the issues of structural social injustice, the unequal distribution of land and income which so affected children, been debated at the national level? It would also be helpful to know whether measures had been taken to ensure that the rights of the child were included in discussions of the budget. At 9 per cent, the proportion of total foreign assistance devoted to children seemed low by international standards, in accordance with which it was expected that 20 per cent of a budget should be devoted to children. Finally, it would be useful if an analysis could be provided of the real impact on the lives of children of the reforms currently under discussion.

24. Mrs. EUFEMIO inquired about the role of local Government in NGOs in funding programmes for children. It would also be helpful to know if those working in the area of children's rights and the Community "Commissioners" in particular, were volunteers or members of organizations. Lastly, she asked whether efforts had been made to reconcile the new Minors Code and the reforms to the Family Code; it would be useful to know in what areas their provisions overlapped.

25. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI said that, despite good intentions, the generally troubled economic situation in South America seemed to be obstructing the implementation of social programmes. Unfortunately, social programmes were continually under threat, with programmes for children and the elderly the first to go. It would be useful to know whether efforts had been made to institutionalize the reforms undertaken so as to ensure their continuity. It would also be helpful to know, as a point of reference, what portion of the budget was devoted to the payment of the external debt in comparison to that which was allocated for social programmes for children, and what importance was attached to teaching the public about the Convention. To what extent were the legal codes themselves applicable at the national level? Had the number of juvenile court judges increased? If no juvenile court judges were serving in their region, what recourse did provincial families have? The matter of whether the cases of children would be heard by judges or procurators obscured a fundamental issue: the detention of children in jails, constituted a basic infringement of their rights. While custodial centres, in many cases tantamount to progress had apparently been made in the development of legal instruments, much work remained to be done in the areas of budgeting and social programmes.

26. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras), responding to the first group of questions, confirmed that her country's accession to, and implementation of, the Convention on the Rights of the Child had certainly given new focus and impetus to the process of change, notably with regard to the welfare and development of the large disadvantaged section of the population. The family unit was a direct beneficiary; that included not only children, as the principal subject of concern, but also women, who were increasingly perceived as agents for change, notably through the nurturing, upbringing and education of their offspring.

27. Mrs. QUIROZ CORDERO (Honduras) said that, although the Convention had not broken completely new ground in Honduras, having been predated by instruments such as the Minors (Jurisdiction) Act, it had placed the defence and advancement of the rights of the child on firmer foundations. Implementation of its provisions, which had the force of internal law, had, for example, influenced other new legal provisions which had been formulated in collaboration with the National Social Welfare Board, relating to the reintegration, rehabilitation or special protection of minors in difficulty who appeared before juvenile court judges or departmental judges. The law provided that the detention of minors in penal institutions or in police premises must be kept to a minimum. The rulings of the courts were carefully monitored on behalf of the juveniles concerned to ensure that they were in the best interests of the latter. Moreover, the Convention could be invoked before juvenile or family courts through non-governmental organizations or individuals representing the minors in question. While the legal institution of parental authority was fully preserved, judges were instructed always to act in the best interests of the child. In sum, she considered that the situation was satisfactory and would be further improved as the reforms under way became effective.

28. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras), referring to economic aspects, said that the country's external debt was obviously aggravating the already precarious situation of the many children living in abject poverty. The State Modernization Law, proposed as a remedy by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, entailed radical reductions in administrative expenditure, and many State-funded programmes were being cut back in consequence. Efforts were, however, being made to merge certain activities in order to avoid duplication and to reduce the negative impact of the reform process, but increased unemployment and additional hardship were an inevitable consequence. In other areas of international cooperation, notably with European Governments, attempts were being made to secure funding for the social sector through negotiated agreements.

29. She went on to describe the process of agrarian reform over the past two decades, in the course of which the allocation of land to peasant farmers had been accompanied by changes in the concept of male and female rights: thus, women were now legally entitled to own land, although their access to production mechanisms and technical assistance remained problematic.

30. In order to meet budgetary constraints, social programmes that had not proved successful were being eliminated, and efforts were being made to multiply the effects of social investment. In accordance with the underlying commitment of the Social Investment Fund, and for the first time in many years, the proportion of the national budget to be allocated to the education and health sectors was being increased and should reach 25 per cent in 1995. The draft budget for those sectors had been prepared with the collaboration of representatives of the National Social Welfare Board and other bodies acting in support of the interests of the family and the child.

31. It was difficult to quantify the volume of private investment in social welfare, although there was some evidence that initiatives for "social compensation" included the funding of micro-enterprises and other development schemes. Provision for a social development component was included in a draft convention between the public and private sectors that was currently being drawn up.

32. Concerning participation in the implementation of the Convention at the local level, she observed that poverty was a limiting factor in the mobilization of individuals for the purpose of monitoring and promoting its implementation, especially in isolated communities. Consideration was being given to the reimbursement of expenses incurred in human rights activities, which were for the most part undertaken on a voluntary basis.

33. Mrs. QUIROZ CORDERO (Honduras) called particular attention to the adverse effects of budgetary rigour on the further development of legal machinery for the protection of minors, pointing out that there was already a significant shortage of juvenile court judges. Similarly, there were severe limitations to the training of social workers, teachers, health personnel, lawyers, police officers and other persons working with children within the framework of the Convention, although provision for such training was already made in the new Minors Code. The National Commission on the Rights of the Child was, however, training persons working with the National Social Welfare Board and affiliated institutions.

34. Provisions covering virtually all the rights of the child as set out in the Convention would be transferred from the Family Code and other relevant instruments to the new Minors Code.

35. Mrs. EUFEMIO, responding to the previous speaker's final remark, asked what would remain in the Family Code.

36. Mrs. QUIROZ CORDERO (Honduras) said that although a final decision on the contents of the two instruments had yet to be taken, it was likely that matters relating to marriage, separation, divorce and the recognition or withdrawal of parental authority would be retained in the Family Code; guardianship and adoption questions would be covered by the Minors Code.

37. Mr. HAMMARBERG, noting the Honduran representative's observation concerning conditionality and debt relief, said that while a measure of pruning and rationalization in government expenditure and bureaucracy was sometimes called for and even desirable, there appeared to be little room in Honduras for cuts that would not imperil the essential programmes of benefit to the country's children, of whom two thirds lived in extreme poverty and some 55 per cent suffered from malnutrition. So-called piecemeal "social compensation" measures did not appear to be an adequate remedy: massive reforms and more - not less - expenditure on broad education and health programmes were called for. He would welcome further general comments on that issue, as well as additional information on relations with the international donor community, which certainly ought to be invited to allocate greater resources than in the past to children's programmes.

38. He welcomed the Honduran delegation's comments on the question of land ownership and the special place of women therein, but added that his principal concern was with the issue of land distribution as a whole: it seemed that 55 per cent of the presumably fertile land was occupied by 4 per cent of the country's farms. Unless the new Government was prepared to begin to challenge such structural injustices and to address them through comprehensive programmes, the situation of children would take a long time to improve.

39. Obviously it was important to know the volume of private investment in programmes and projects for children; further efforts from that sector should be encouraged, not least by the country's very dynamic network of non-governmental organizations.

40. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras) acknowledged the structural aspect of poverty in her country and described in greater detail the sensitive issue of land ownership, which had been a preoccupation of successive Governments. Unfortunately, the transfer or sale of deeds of ownership had not always resulted in increased productivity. Peasants unable to cope with their new responsibilities or to meet their payments had on occasion been obliged to sell their newly acquired land back to the previous owners. The difficulties encountered were not, however, considered to be a reason for interrupting the process of agrarian reform, which was continuing under the responsibility of the very person who had provided the initial impetus for land redistribution some 20 years before. Although the issue of the legal entitlement of women

to land ownership had been resolved, many problems of a practical nature prevented them from asserting their presence in agriculture to the same extent as in commerce and the service industries.

41. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras) said that the whole international community had shown great sympathy and support for the current programmes in aid of mothers and children. The Inter-American Development Bank had agreed to help the country to do more in the social sector, especially in the areas of education and health. The donor community had agreed plans to give greater importance to the social sector over traditional investments in infrastructure. At the same time, an attempt was being made to reduce bureaucracy and leave more money for practical programmes. Consultants were working on plans for the merger of various institutions and some constitutional changes would be necessary.

42. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI said that extreme poverty lay at the root of all the country's problems; massive structural reforms were needed. On his visit to Honduras, he had met with much good will in the Government and among those responsible for services for children but the necessary budgetary support was not forthcoming. Efforts to improve children's health services were being frustrated by lack of means. The same was true of the judicial system. Only two of the minors' procurators supposed to defend children without lawyers had been appointed and they only worked part-time. The plan to provide teachers for street children had been dropped for lack of money. The country faced an enormous challenge and needed the full cooperation of the private sector in a whole range of services that the Government was unable to provide.

43. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras) said that priority was being given to measures for the protection of mothers and children but the resources needed were enormous. Budgetary allocations for health and education had been increased and figures for the various ministries had been provided in documents annexed to the reply to the list of issues. The training of human resources was another area posing a great challenge.

44. Mr. KOLOSOV asked whether the Honduran delegation could cite a specific instance in which the Convention had been invoked in court or any judgement based on a particular provision of the Convention. He took as an example the registration of births. The large number of unregistered children in Honduras was reflected in the population statistics. Under Honduran law, if a child was not registered within one year of birth, registration could only take place after a judicial decision. He asked whether the provisions of article 7 of the Convention in practice helped families to register their children. The judicial decision required under Honduran law might be positive or negative. The provisions of article 7 would protect every child against a negative decision by the court in that respect.

45. The Committee had been told that training programmes for social workers, teachers, lawyers, police officers and others who worked with children were in place and that awareness of the provisions of the Convention was gradually being raised. However, every convention, particularly complicated instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, needed explanation and interpretation, even for lawyers and experts. He asked who was in charge of

the training programmes and how the teachers prepared themselves to teach others how to interpret and implement the Convention. He would like to know whether those providing the training were aware of the Committee's recommendations on children in armed conflicts or subject to economic exploitation, for example, and of the publications of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, which contained important essays on similar topics, including some by members of the Committee.

46. The CHAIRPERSON said that she too felt concerned about the actual implementation of the Convention, especially in remote rural areas. The State had a responsibility to ensure that awareness of the Convention and its application to legal proceedings involving children was spread throughout the country.

47. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras) said that, at the national level, the training programmes were conducted by staff of the various ministries concerned by the provisions of the Convention, such as the Ministries of Health, Education and Justice. The Honduran Commission for Human Rights had published a lot of material on the terms of the Convention. Some of the private social welfare institutions were also involved in running seminars. Advice had been sought from UNICEF on measures to train local officials and involve communities. However, nothing had yet been done to unify the various efforts. Nevertheless, the preparatory work being done was important and with further experience training could be improved at all levels.

48. Mrs. QUIROZ CORDERO (Honduras) said that, in practice, applications to register children over the age of one were never denied. The attorneys appointed to act as minors' procurators in places where there were no juvenile courts were in future to work full-time and carry out all the functions prescribed by law. The training seminars referred to were meant not only for judges and lawyers, but also for municipal officials. She conceded that, in rural areas, it was difficult to ensure that the Convention was implemented but, in places where there was no juvenile court, it could be invoked by the official responsible for defending children charged with an offence.

49. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Committee to proceed to the section of the list of issues entitled "Definition of the child", which read:

"Definition of the child

(art. 1 of the Convention)

11. In the light of paragraphs 20 and 21 of the report, please provide further information on the notion of citizenship and on the way it may affect the exercise by the child of his or her rights, namely in the light of article 5 of the Convention."

50. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras) said that in Honduras, citizenship was the legal status whereby a person acquired such political rights as the right to vote and be elected, to carry out public functions, to join political organizations and so forth. Such status was acquired on reaching the age of 18. The exercise of citizenship could be suspended in the event of a sentence of imprisonment or through a court order. There were also six grounds on which

it could be lost completely, including service with the enemies of Honduras in time of war or, in the case of naturalized Hondurans, residence abroad for more than two consecutive years without prior authorization by the Executive. It could be restored on completion of a sentence or through amnesty or pardon. Persons under 18 were not subject to those rules, which applied only to adults and did not affect the child directly in the exercise of the rights recognized in the Convention, although they did so indirectly in the sense that the child's parents, extended family or legal guardians had an important influence on the child's welfare. Citizenship thus implied an age-limit for the exercise of political rights but should not be understood as restricting the rights of children under the Convention, which took precedence over domestic law. All persons under the age of 18 were regarded as children.

51. The CHAIRPERSON said it would appear from the report that children could not be citizens. In connection with the distinction between the age of majority and coming of age or emancipation, she noted that there seemed to be some confusion over the question of parental authority. According to paragraph 23 (a) (i), parental authority was the legal institution whereby a set of duties was imposed on the parents and certain rights conferred on them. It would appear, however, that only the father had any authority vis-à-vis emancipation of the child. She would like to know the situation of the mother in that regard.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.